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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 001604

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GT](#)

SUBJECT: ATTACK AGAINST KAREN FISCHER REPORTED

1. (U) On June 23, major daily "Prensa Libre" reported that Karen Fischer, former Special Prosecutor against Corruption and private plaintiff in the 1993 murder of "El Grafico" publisher Jorge Carpio Nicolle, was the target of an attempted assault June 19. EconCouns contacted Fischer, who reported that three men were waiting in front of her Guatemala city home when she returned from her farm, and that one of the men had fired at her car, injuring a bodyguard. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) will hold a hearing on the Carpio case on July 5, and Fischer believed that the attack against her could be related to the case.

2. (U) While in route to a political rally in El Quiche on July 3, 1993, Jorge Carpio Nicolle, founder of the National Central Union party (UCN), twice presidential candidate, and then Head of Congress, was stopped in his car and shot to death, along with three members of his campaign team. Though surface investigations by the Public Ministry attributed the murder to an attempted robbery, human rights leaders have maintained that ex-civil self defense patrollers (ex-PACs) from Jocopilas were responsible. Carpio's ex-daughter-in-law and former private secretary, Karen Fischer, has been active as a private plaintiff and spokesperson for the prosecution of Carpio's death, both in the Guatemalan legal system and in the IACHR.

3. (U) Guatemala press attributed the attack against Fischer to the upcoming July 5 hearing on the Carpio case in the IACHR. Fischer was unharmed, but one of her bodyguards was injured and briefly hospitalized. EconCouns spoke to Fischer, who told him that she was uncertain about whether the incident could be related to the IACHR hearing. Fischer, who requested no assistance from the Embassy, reported that Attorney General Juan Luis Florido, Interior Minister Arturo Soto, and Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales had also called her to expressed concern.

4. (C) MINUGUA official Tim Koenigs told the Ambassador June 23 that their initial inquiry raised some questions as to what may actually have happened. He noted that Fischer had not reported the incident until a day after it happened, that she (a former prosecutor) had made no effort to secure the crime scene and that the lightly injured bodyguard was avoiding being questioned by police. Koenig said the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman had its doubts, too. Fischer told EconCouns that she had assumed that the police would be notified by the hospital and had reported the shooting the next day after learning that the police were still unaware. To this point, the National Civil Police (PNC) and the Human Rights Ombudsman's office (PDH) have still not been able to question the injured bodyguard further to clarify his testimony. Koenig said it may be difficult under the circumstances to determine the truth; stressing that he/his staff were speculating. Koenig said embarrassment over an accidental discharge may have led the bodyguard to come up with the version of an assault.

5. (C) The June 23 edition of Prensa Libre also reported that Frank LaRue, head of the President's Commission on Human Rights (COPREDEH) received a death threat against himself and Fischer in relation to the Carpio case. However, LaRue downplayed the report to HROff, stating that though a anonymous caller to COPREDEH did mention both individuals, he did not consider the call a genuine threat.

5. (SBU) On June 28, daily "El Periodico" published a paid advertisement from Fischer, thanking the PDH, Minister Soto, the international community, and others for their support following the attack. Comment. The PNC have provided protection for Fischer coordinated by COPREDEH for the past three years and will continue to do so. The silver lining in this incident is that it has drawn increased international and press attention to the outcome of the IACHR's upcoming ruling in the previously low-profile Carpio case.

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